

Mr. KINGSTON. Madam Chair, I offer this amendment with Ms. *McCollum* from Minnesota today. In fact, it was her amendment from last year that got me involved in this. Basically, what this does is stops the Defense Department from using major sports sponsorships, such as NASCAR motor sports and bass fishing, for a recruitment tool, which is no longer necessary.

There are a number of reasons for this:

Number one, it's not effective. On May 18, 2012, Major Brian Creech said in the USA Today that the National Guard's spending \$26.5 million dollars to sponsor NASCAR got 24,800 inquiries. Of those, they got 20 potential recruits. Of those, what did they get for the \$26 million? Not one single recruit. I want to say again, \$26 million, 24,000 inquiries, zero--zero--recruits. It's not effective.

Now, the National Guard support group has been going around with this document saying, Oh, yes, but look at all the images that we get. Well, again, out of this, according to their own document, they got 40 recruits. So for the money, if you do the math, that's \$72,000 per recruit.

And why is that? Well, perhaps because the demographic of NASCAR is that 69 percent of the people are over 35. So when they go and they're pushing their brand or advertising at NASCAR, nearly 70 percent of the people aren't eligible. That's not their target group.

The RAND Corporation, in its 2007 study of recruitment, said that if you want to increase recruitment, then you have to increase the number of recruiters, period. That was the number one thing. That's why on July 10, the Army dropped out of it, and they said:

Although it is a beneficial endeavor for us, it's also rather expensive, and we decided we could repurpose that investment into other programs.

So when Ms. *McCollum* actually originally offered this, it was an \$80 million reduction into the savings account, but since the Army dropped it, now we're offering \$72 million.

Secondly, very, very important for us to remember is that the military is reducing its size now, not because of sequestration, before sequestration. They're dropping the number of troops in the Army and the Marines by 103,000, alone. The Defense Department's recruiter has said that the recruitment is high right now because of the economy.

Now, number 3, this program has no accountability. In February, our office, as a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, we asked the Pentagon: What are your hard numbers? If you're spending \$72 million sponsoring major sports programs, what are you getting out of it? And they couldn't come up with it. Now, that disturbs me as a fiscal conservative, because I want to believe that if the Pentagon is spending that much money on something, they're able to defend it.

The Miller Beer Company actually put it this way. They said it this way. They said, on exposure:

I don't care how much exposure we get, what that is supposed to be worth, or what our awareness is versus the competition. I need to be able to tell our CEO and our shareholders how many additional cases of beer that I sold.

In short, the Army can't tell us how many recruiters they really do get from this.

And, number four, we've got sequestration facing us, on top of a \$487 billion defense cut over the next 10 years, plus a troop reduction of over 100,000 already. We may have additional cuts. And Secretary Panetta has said that we need to work together to find better ways to spend the money and stretch our dollars.

I'm as pro military as they get. I'm proud to say I believe the First District of Georgia has as much military as any district in the country. I have four major military installations and two guard facilities. We have every branch of the military, and we have a bombing range in there. The only thing that has a bigger population than my military are my NASCAR fans. And yet they're saying to me, We're pro NASCAR, but we realize the situation in America today is that for every dollar we spend, 40 cents is borrowed. We can spend this money a lot better than we are today.

Again, look what we're spending per recruit. According to the National Guard document which they provided our office--at least they did provide us with a document which we did not get from the Pentagon--it is still costing us over \$700,000 per recruit, from their own documentation.

We can do better than this, and that's why Ms. *McCollum* and I have worked together and reached across the aisle to say we can spend this money elsewhere more effectively.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. McHENRY. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from North Carolina is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. *McHENRY*. Madam Chair, I certainly appreciate my colleagues, Ms. *McCollum* and Mr. *Kingston*, and what they're trying to achieve, and I certainly support paring down the budget where it is appropriate and where it actually saves money.

My colleague references some numbers that come from the Army. The Army is getting out of this type of sponsorship. The numbers that I want to give you are from the National Guard that intends to stay in this form of advertising for recruiting purposes and also for building goodwill among the American people.

This sponsorship program that the National Guard has, in one form, one very specific form of sponsorship that they have, as well as a number of others, but this one form of sponsorship for NASCAR, the National Guard saw a nearly 300 percent return on their investment. Now, that comes from \$68 million in media exposure. It comes from 5.5 million pieces of merchandise and apparel that has "National Guard" on it, which has a value of roughly \$70 million. This is a huge

return for the buck. This is why Fortune 500 companies actually advertise through NASCAR-- not because it feels good, but because it delivers results.

And the fact is that no matter the size of the military, you're going to still need recruits. And the fact remains, if we look at the example of 2005 where the Army didn't meet their recruiting goals, what we had to do is increase the budget for retention. So the fact of cutting one area of recruiting means that in a couple of years we'll have to actually pay more for retention in order to keep the same folks in the National Guard that we currently need.

Furthermore, back to this one particular form of advertising, I think it's highly inappropriate for this Congress to get into the business of specifying how best the National Guard, or whatever branch, should spend their dollars on recruiting.

The Appropriations Committee has done a yeoman's task of making sure that we scrub the Department of Defense budget from top to bottom. I think this is a very strong and good appropriations bill. It does have bipartisan support. But let's face it, when we start micromanaging advertising programs to try to recruit National Guard members, we've sort of slipped into the absurd.

The National Guard, from the experience that they've had in NASCAR advertising in particular, they generated 54,000 leads. I wish my colleague had referenced that other than these other numbers that you referenced before, which I think are a good reason why the Army is not continuing with that program. They didn't design it appropriately, apparently. But the National Guard has got a huge bang for the buck and has actually gotten recruits because of this form of advertising.

I would encourage my colleagues, if they voted ``no" on the McCollum amendments last year-- there were two different amendments that deal with this very same issue. If they voted ``no" on those two amendments, they need to vote ``no" again.

Madam Chairman, I would say this again. If you voted ``no" on those two amendments that are structurally the same, vote ``no" again. I would encourage my colleagues to do that, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. McCOLLUM. Madam Chair, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Minnesota is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. *McCOLLUM*. Well, we just heard from the last speaker that part of what all this money is being spent on is branding and goodwill and that the Congress, and we today, should not be making any changes and micromanaging what the National Guard is doing.

I would call to our colleagues' attention legislation, Public Law 106-398, in the 106th Congress. The Legislative Information System, which is available to all of us, directs us as to what really took place in the 106th Congress.

We directed the Secretary of the Army, during a period beginning on October 1, 2000, and ending December 1, 2005, to carry out a pilot program to test various recruiting approaches. One of them was to be an outreach that the Army was going to do with motor sports. It doesn't work, and that's why the Army has dropped it.

The National Guard, through what Mr. *Kingston* had, didn't come to us directly. We were provided some sponsorship information through NASCAR of all the contacts and all the hits. Everybody who walked through the gate was counted as being part of branding. Folks, this was not supposed to be about branding; it was supposed to be about recruiting. That's why the Army spokesman on CNN said, when they announced that they were ending their 10-year, multidollar, taxpayer-funded relationship with NASCAR, ``It was not a great investment.

The Navy pulled out. The Marine Corps pulled out of NASCAR years ago. But yet the Pentagon has paid one racing team--Mr. Earnhardt's team--\$136 million in taxpayer funds for the National Guard logo on his car in the name of recruitment. This year, they're paying Mr. Earnhardt again \$26.5 million, to which the National Guard has reported--this is what the Guard told me--20 qualified candidates expressing interest, zero actual recruits.

For the past 2 years, the National Guard has spent more than \$20 million in taxpayer funds on professional bass fishing tournaments. Folks, we're in a fiscal crisis here. Bass fishing is not a national security priority. This Congress is cutting services to communities and needy families because we're in a fiscal crisis, yet the Pentagon is spending in excess of \$80 million on NASCAR racing sponsorships, professional bass fishing, ultimate cage fighting, and other sports sponsorships. The program is a waste of taxpayer money; it doesn't work.

Over the past few days, the professional sports lobby has come out in full force to protect their taxpayer-funded subsidy. For the purposes of the 2013 Defense appropriation bill, those pro teams are military contractors who have failed to deliver on their contract in the past for the taxpayers for recruits.

I want to thank Representative *Kingston* for his leadership on this and joining me to cut a Pentagon program that's just not effective.

This committee, in which we're having this bill discussed right now, has been bipartisan in the way the bill has been put together and bipartisan in the way this amendment has been offered. If the private sector wants to pool their money to sponsor military race car teams to demonstrate their patriotism, I say fantastic and go for it. But it is my job to be a steward of taxpayer funds.

I want to be clear about something else this amendment does not do. This amendment in no way, shape, or form prohibits or limits military recruiters from recruiting at NASCAR races or any other sports event. I just want the military recruiters to attend those races and community events where there are potential recruits.

We need, as Mr. *Kingston* pointed out, more recruiters doing their job in the right way. They have ideas, folks, on how they can do this better. We need to listen to the recruiters.

So, I think it will be just irresponsible and outrageous that Congress would go ahead and continue to borrow money from China to pay one race car driver's team \$26 million for delivering zero recruits. Our Nation is facing a fiscal crisis. Communities and families and seniors and vulnerable children are bearing the brunt of deep and painful budget cuts. Congress needs to get its priorities in order and stop protecting military spending that doesn't work.

I urge my colleagues to support Mr. *Kingston*'s amendment. It's an honor to be a partner to it. We need to cut the wasteful spending in programs and reduce this deficit.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. MYRICK. Madam Chair, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from North Carolina is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MYRICK. Like my colleague, Mr. *McHenry*, I also am rising because I do oppose this amendment, saying that the Department of Defense has to limit what they do and decide how they can recruit. And mainly, it's micromanaging.

The biggest issue here is this approach is not going to save a dime in the long run because when recruitment goals aren't met--and that is a challenge--the military pays out nearly \$1 billion a year in extra recruitment bonuses to maintain needed recruitment numbers. We're talking, of course, about the National Guard, who did have a 4-1 return on investment in motor sports.

But we've got to be aware that we've got to recruit men and women where they are. We need the best men and women that we can in our military service. Of course, we owe all of those who are currently serving a great debt of gratitude, but I don't believe that we need to tell them how to best do their recruiting.

I'm also a conservative, and I believe strongly in rooting out government waste, but that's not what this amendment does because in the long run we end up spending more money on recruitment.

As my colleague said before, the House has twice voted down this amendment--it's the same vote--and I urge them to do so again.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PALAZZO. Madam Chair, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Mississippi is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALAZZO. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to this amendment.

Just this past weekend, I had the great honor and privilege to send over 150 young men and women off to Fort Bliss to prepare for their final training to go overseas. This is the 857th Engineering Company. Their mission is horizontal construction, which is pretty much they're going to be clearing roads. As we know, that's one of the most dangerous missions in Afghanistan.

Now, I was too busy shaking hands and talking to families and others to notice what I would probably have seen in the parking lot, and that would have been a lot of bumper stickers. On those bumper stickers, there wouldn't be faces or political advertisements--of course, I wish there would be some--but it was more numbers: number 3, number 11, number 24, number 14. Most likely, there would have been a few number 88s out there, which is the car Dale Earnhardt drives for NASCAR. So with that, right now there is absolutely no reason this Congress should be telling the Department of Defense how and where to spend money on recruitment.

Sport sponsorships have continually been a major source of recruitment and provided a great deal of return on investment. The only other option is to spend more on recruitment and retention bonuses. As my colleague just mentioned, when they fall below a certain number, they spend billions of dollars, and we're not talking about billions of dollars. So this actually saves taxpayers' money so we can continue to find the young men and women to serve in our Nation's military.

As it currently stands, the National Guard cannot advertise on television, which significantly limits their opportunities to reach the audience that they want to reach. This is an effective program that remains a key tool for our National Guard and other branches of our military services.

This bill is already taking serious cuts from advertising and marketing budgets for the Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and National Guard accounts. They have all been cut significantly already before this amendment. There is no reason why we should continue to tie their hands by cutting more funds from the budget.

These sponsorships provide the ability to market and create branding opportunities and familiarity with the service branches in areas where market research shows that the target audience spends its time. For example, data shows that NASCAR fans are very large, up to 70 million--I think that's a low number--very patriotic, very pro-military fan base, and are extremely loyal to sponsors of teams and drivers. This is exactly who we want joining our U.S. military.

Madam Chair, we are currently dealing with very serious cut to our military because of sequestration. This is not the time or the place to be cutting the tools that our military is using to recruit the very best, patriotic young people who want to serve our Nation in the military.

The military is maximizing their resources to fulfill their mission at home and abroad. If this wasn't successful, they wouldn't be doing it. I ask that my colleagues oppose the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Chair, I'd like to voice my opposition to the amendment sponsored by Mr. *Kingston* and Ms. *McCollum*, aimed at banning pro-sports sponsorship by the Department of Defense.

Truly, we are in an era where the people's government should take proactive efforts to trim excesses from the budget wherever possible. This measure, Madam Chair, does not attack an excess of government. If accepted, the U.S. Government would be cutting out a proven successful investment in our Nation's military personnel.

The Army, the National Guard, and the National Guard Association strongly oppose this amendment. Last year, over 280 Members, in a bipartisan vote, opposed this amendment.

Appropriations Committee Chairman *Rogers* and Defense Subcommittee Chairman *Young* have both been opposed to this measure in committee votes and floor votes. Chairman *Young* has repeatedly said in 2012 that he opposes it.

Our military deserves access to the most qualified potential recruits available. A vote in favor of this amendment would handicap our military's recruiting efforts.

Starting in 1999, marketing the military through sports opened the door for the DOD's efforts to brand and to showcase their services to a specific target audience. The National Guard cannot advertise on broadcast television, so professional sports sponsorships become an efficient, effective means of reaching target markets for recruiting and retention of citizen soldiers and airmen.

Our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are athletes. It only makes sense to advertise and market to professional sports venues. Athletes share common values with the military such as honor, integrity, individual responsibility, teamwork, and self-sacrifice.

Additionally, athletes are a key demographic in the men and women we want to serve. With the DOD's strict requirements for a recruit to qualify, only one in every four young people is even eligible to join. The DOD's success rate in recruiting stems from their direct access to potential recruits and influencers of men and women, like-minded about their interest in joining the military, often found at sporting events.

Pro sports sponsorships increase the DOD's visibility, generate recruitment opportunities at events, and provide a national platform to promote each branch's image.

In addition to recruitment and a recognizable national profile, military sponsorships in motorsports spotlight a good return on investment, dollar for dollar. In 2011 alone, the Army National Guard spent \$44 million on motorsports sponsorships. But based on market value, the

total media exposure the Guard received totaled over \$150 million, a 336 percent return on investment.

If less is spent on advertising, history proves that DOD will have to increase dollars for bonuses to retain current military personnel and increase dollars for recruiting bonuses.

DOD motorsports partnerships have resulted in key transfers of technology. For example, the first Humvee sent to Iraq had canvas doors. Additional armor added created challenges to the Humvee's suspension systems. The marines turned to NASCAR engineers to help solve the problem.

An additional project developed by the marines is the mine roller. Pushed in front of trucks, the roller can detonate explosive devices, while protecting the marines in the vehicle. One of the first rollers in Iraq took a blast and saved the three marines inside. The mine roller uses new suspension technology developed by the Joe Gibbs NASCAR racing team. Base commanders say that cooperation between base workers and businesses across the country is saving troops' lives.

Beyond the direct investment, DOD pro sponsorships positively influence communities surrounding our Nation's personnel. For example, the National Guard works together with their partners in Panther racing and IndyCar to address unemployment affecting service members and their families by sponsoring hiring fairs, outreach efforts, and employer education.

This amendment would likely limit the military from participating in the Olympics, flyovers over games, sponsoring marathons such as the Marine Corps Marathon, as well as the Blue Angels, the Thunderbirds, and the Golden Knights.

Cutting all funding towards DOD pro sports sponsorships hinders military recruitment of qualified candidates, impairs employment resources for our Nation's military families, and severely damages a positive financial investment for our military.

To directly quote the DOD:

To ensure the Nation fields a military fully capable of performing any assigned mission, we must recruit highly qualified men and women from across America. This amendment will directly impact the recruiting quality and overall mission requirements, increasing costs, and forcing reductions in the standards for accessions.

A vote for this amendment is a vote against the effectiveness of our military. Please join me in opposing this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KISSELL. Madam Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from North Carolina is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KISSELL. I rise in opposition to this amendment, and I'm not going to repeat what my colleague from Georgia just said. He covered the facts well.

I think it's important here that we recognize that relationships matter; and the relationship that we have seen with the military and especially NASCAR seems to be getting the brunt of the attention here, a long-time relationship, an important relationship.

NASCAR grew up in North Carolina. Its home is in my district in central North Carolina. While NASCAR has spread out throughout the Nation, which we're excited about, still the roots are here at home and in kind of rural America.

I don't think it's any coincidence that when we look at our military forces, about 41 percent of our military is from what we describe as rural America, which is only 17 percent of our population. And that relationship between the military and rural America is very important. The relationship between NASCAR and rural America--and all America--is very important. We don't need to interfere with that relationship.

I don't think it's any surprise that the most popular driver in NASCAR drives the National Guard car, No. 88, Dale Earnhardt, Jr. This brings kind of the relationship and the viewing that cannot be done in many other ways, and so we don't need to strike that relationship. We need to build upon that.

And when you start looking at the ramifications, as my colleague talked about earlier, other ways that this money can be used to help build this relationship, we look at NASCAR, the Special Forces working with NASCAR to develop equipment for our military.

I'm cochair of Invisible Wounds, the idea of how we can absorb the energy to help our soldiers that are in combat situations. NASCAR works on this.

The tickets that are given to our military families, to the military themselves, this is all part of that relationship. It works. We need for it to work.

I oppose this amendment and ask my colleagues to also oppose it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. POSEY. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POSEY. We were at home watching NASCAR on television a couple of years ago, and my wife said, What are the armed services doing sponsoring NASCAR cars? Don't they have a better use to spend their money than to spend those big bucks on NASCAR?

And I said, Well, Katie, I can understand why you would think that. But, you know, we have a volunteer military, and they have to advertise for recruits somewhere. Where would you think the money would be better spent?

Do you think they should advertise at the philharmonic? Or maybe you think they should advertise at the ballet. We could surely get some burly, mean paratroopers if we advertised at the ballet. I think that NASCAR is a very appropriate place to advertise for recruits, just like boxing rings might be, cage fights might be.

So I made some inquiries about it to our armed services, and they said, you're exactly right on point. As our good friend, Mr. *McHenry*, from North Carolina shared with you a little while ago, the statistics are overwhelmingly in favor of expenditures where you get the greatest return. And the NASCAR sponsorship seems to have the greatest return, which results in the greatest savings for our taxpayers back home.

Now, I wish we were spending this time right now, rather than trying to micromanage how our military most efficiently advertises for recruits, discussing the \$14 billion our government overpaid to people who were not entitled to unemployment compensation, but got it anyway.

I wish right now we were discussing the \$4 billion in refunds in the form of tax credits our government has given to bogus dependents of people who are here illegally.

I wish we were talking about the millions of dollars we've wasted in the GAO.

I wish we were talking about the millions of dollars we've wasted in crony capitalism investment in Solyndra and the like, and so-called green energy enterprises.

But no, we're not. We are sitting here today. Some people are trying to micromanage how our military gets recruits for its all-volunteer Army, and they are telling the people who are best at managing our military how to do their jobs. It's an old adage. It's an old cliché. It seems like everybody knows how to make a baby stop crying except the person holding it. I think, in this case, that applies, and I think we should yield to the best judgment of our armed services in how they feel they need to recruit.

I have seen Democratic Presidential candidates advertise on NASCAR. I saw a Democratic gubernatorial candidate advertise on race cars. As far as Okeechobee Speedway, I was at Okeechobee Speedway once, and I ran into somebody from the other side of the aisle whom I never expected to see at a racetrack.

I said, What are you doing here?

She said, Well, when person ``blank," who was running for Governor, decided we needed to focus on middle America, she decided she wanted to sponsor a race car at Okeechobee Speedway.

Before that, I didn't even know there was an Okeechobee Speedway.

She said, Do you know what? It was the best investment of campaign money we've ever spent.

These are from the other side of the aisle. I'm sure I could talk a lot about my friends on this side of the aisle and about how they've made good and wise investments, too.

Again, in this case, I'd like for you to rely upon and reflect upon the comments made by Mr. *McHenry*, who talked about the very pure and simple results and accountability that has been achieved by letting the military--the people we trust the most with protecting our country and our freedoms--do the job that they are entitled to do.

Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Much of the debate that I would have on this amendment would be very similar to the one I'd had earlier when the issue was of the military bans, so I won't repeat those again.

I would mention the fact that this amendment was defeated by this same House several times last year on the Defense appropriations bill. We have an interesting situation here, though, today. This amendment is very similar to language later on in the bill that is subject to a point of order. It has been skillfully rewritten so that this one is not subject to a point of order, but it is basically the same issue.

Now, understand the United States of America does not have the largest military in the world. We do have, by far, the best--but not the largest--and our military is all volunteer. Members of the military serve because they want to. Yet, as the all-volunteer force rotates and changes, members are leaving--they retire; their time is up; they get out; they have to constantly be replaced. There has to be a constant flow of recruits coming in as the older members leave. The military has been running recruiting programs for years and years and years and very, very successfully. They know a little bit about what it takes to encourage recruiting.

The amendment, itself, does more than just strike out the sports--NASCAR--and all of these issues. It actually cuts \$30 million more than is spent on these issues. I don't know why they won't take that extra \$30 million. Anyway, we should not pass this amendment. It is, like I said, very similar to one that is already in the bill that is subject to a point of order.

I say let the military run the recruiting as they have done successfully for all of these years in order to maintain an all-volunteer force--a powerful message to the young Americans or the older Americans who want to serve. Men and women want to serve their country in the military, and these recruiting programs get their attention and direct them where they need to be directed. So I think this just isn't a good idea to pass this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PENCE. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment offered by my colleagues, Rep. MCCOLLUM and Rep. KINGSTON. And let me say that while I wholeheartedly agree to the notion that this body must take the lead in putting our nation back on the path towards fiscal responsibility, the move to prohibit our military services from advancing recruitment and retention goals through various athletic sponsorships is unwise.

At a time when the men and women of our Armed Forces are undertaking operations around the world, we must not move to end the successful platforms used by the Department of Defense to recruit able men and women into their ranks.

Contrary to popular belief, these sponsorships also go far beyond driver appearances, commercials and decals on race cars. In fact, the National Guard's sponsorship of the Panther Racing IndyCar team has not only been successful in raising the Guard's profile and getting it in front of potential recruits, but also technology transfers between these entities will allow for our service members to be better protected when downrange.

J.R. Hildebrand, who drives the National Guard IndyCar, wears ear sensors that measure the G-forces he experiences during a crash on the racetrack. Those sensors, known as an Integrated Blast Effects Sensor System, are now worn by troops in harm's way. The information gathered can be very useful to neurosurgeons who treat soldiers suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury, often the result of roadside bomb attacks.

Understanding the nature and effects of Traumatic Brain Injury advances the ways in which we protect and treat our fighting men and women, and those same sensors worn by J.R. Hildebrand have a direct benefit to our troops in Afghanistan. Furthermore, helmet technologies developed in IndyCar and the National Football League have been adapted for military use. And these represent just a few of the results from the military's sponsorships, or partnerships with professional sports.

As our service members return to civilian life, they are often faced with a continuing unemployment crisis. In partnership with the National Guard, Panther Racing continues to work with the Employer Support of the National Guard (ESGR) program, an agency within the Department of Defense designed to connect citizen soldiers with employers. Panther Racing continues to work with the Chamber of Commerce to support the Hiring our Heroes program. At race events across the country, the National Guard partnership with Panther Racing brings military members and their spouses together with CEO's of local businesses and ultimately helping get our nation's veterans back to work.

Madam Chair, utilizing military partnerships with professional sports can be a vital tool in improving the lives and care of our service men and women. The results of these programs speak for themselves. Amendments similar to the one currently before this body have been rejected by wide margins and I urge my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to stand with those who wear the uniform and oppose the Kingston/McCollum amendment.